The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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Mrs. Watson, Newcastle-on-Tyne, £0 10 0

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Any one desirous of having for distribution tracts bearing on the various phases of Unitarianism, may have them on applying to the Rev. J. C. Street, 16 Queen's Arcade, Belfast.

We call the attention of our readers to the notice in our advertising columns of the commencement of the new session of the Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association. Once more it offers to its members and friends a most interesting programme. The titles of the Lectures, Papers, and Discussions give promise of great intellectual enjoyment; and we doubt not that, as usual, this valuable and prosperous Association will secure a large attendance at all its various meetings. The proceedings of the Opening Soiree we report this month.

The Rev. J. C. Street commences his Sunday Evening Lectures on Sunday, October 7th. We trust he may, as during past years, have large audiences to listen to his presentation of the truth and reality of religion. His opening subject is "Civilization and Christianity."

Still another of the Home Missionary College students is coming to Ireland! Mr. Lansdown has accepted a call to Newtownards. The venerable Mr. Moore is still at his post after upwards of 60 years of ministry; but he will now be cheered and strengthened by the presence of a young and energetic colleague, while the congregation will gain both in strength and numbers. We wish the young minister every blessing and success.

Our congregations in Ireland have gained a number of new ministerial recruits this year. They will look for consecrated and self-sacrificing work on the part of these ministers, and doubtless they will not be disappointed. But our congregations must look to it that they give to these ministers a generous and hearty support; upholding them in their work, and strengthening them by sympathy, affection, and generosity. Then there will be good all round.

The Scottish Association is to hold its Annual Meetings early in October, and very serious and interesting business will be discussed, especially that relating to the recent magnificent bequest for the spread of Unitarianism in Scotland. We regret that it is not in the power of the Belfast Unitarian Society to be represented at these important meetings. But our friends in Scotland know and appreciate our deep interest in all their work.

The British and Foreign Unitarian Association holds its Autumnal Meeting at Newcastle-on-Tyne this month. The Rev. F. Walters and his energetic congregation are sure to give the Association a most hearty welcome.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE.

The theology of the future will dwell on something else than the five points of Calvinism; and I have thought it well to consider the counterparts of this ancient system in five points of the coming theology. Let us endeavour to see what they will be.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

I believe the first point of doctrine in the theology of the future will be the *Fatherhood of God*. The essence of this is the love of the father for his children; but fatherly love is a wise love, a firm love and a pure love, which seeks the best good of the child. Thus this idea of fatherhood includes that of the holiness, the truthfulness and the justice of God; in a word, all the divine attributes.

The justice of God as a father is not, as in the old theology, an abstract justice, which has no regard to consequences. God's justice is only another form of mercy; it is the wise law which brings good to the universe, and is a blessing to every creature.

Jesus has everywhere emphasised this truth that God is a father. We find it pervading the gospels and colouring all his teaching. We find it already in the Sermon on the Mount, which tells us that we are to let our light shine, not to glorify ourselves, but to glorify our Father in Heaven; that we are to love our enemies, that we may be like our Heavenly Father, who loves his enemies and makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

Jesus tells us that when we pray we are to pray to our Father, not to an infinite power, or abstract justice, or far-off sovereignty. We are to look up out of our sin and sorrow and weakness, not to an implacable law, but to an infinite and inexhaustible tenderness, and we are to forgive others because our Father in Heaven forgives us. We are not to be anxious, remembering that our Heavenly Father feeds the little birds of the air, We are to pray, confident that our Heavenly Father will give good things to those who ask him. Thus the idea of the Divine Fatherhood pervades the earliest as it fills the latest teachings of Jesus.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.

The second point of doctrine in the new theology will be, I think, *the Brotherhood of Man*.

If men are children of the same father, then they are all brethren. If God loves them all, they must all have in them something loveable. If he has brought them here by his providence, they are here for some important end. Therefore we must call no man common or unclean; look down upon none; despise none; but respect in every man that essential goodness which God has put into the soul, and which he means to be at last unfolded into perfection.

As from the idea of the Fatherhood of God will come all the pieties, so from that of the Brotherhood of Man will proceed all the charities. This doctrine is already the source of missions, philanthropies, reforms, and all efforts to seek and save those who are surrounded by evil. It leads men to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to teach the blind, to soothe the madness of delirium, to diffuse knowledge, and to preach glad tidings to the poor. This doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man, when fully believed, will be the source of purer moralities and nobler charities.

THE LEADERSHIP OF JESUS.

The third point of doctrine in the new theology will be, as I think, the *Leadership of Jesus*.

Christ is our leader, and in following him we follow his mind, his heart, his spirit—the spirit of his words, the spirit of his life. If we know the mind of Christ in regard to any truth or duty, we have what is satisfactory, convincing, substantial. He himself must be the chief source of knowledge in regard to the essence of his gospel. The church may be divided, as to its belief, but if we have the mind of Christ that is enough. We can rest in that, and be perfectly contented.

The simplest definition of a Christian is one who follows Christ. This was Jesus' own definition, "My sheep hear my voice, and follow me." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." "Come to me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden." When Mary sat at his feet and heard his words, he said that she had

chosen the good part, and had done the one thing needful.

SALVATION BY CHARACTER.

The fourth point of the new theology will be *Salvation by Character*.

Salvation means the highest peace and joy of which the soul is capable. It means heaven here and heaven hereafter. This salvation has been explained as something outside of us —some outward gift, some outward condition, place or circumstance. We speak of going to heaven as if we could be made happy solely by being put into a happy place. But the true heaven is a state of the soul. It is inward goodness. It is Christ found within. It is the love of God in the heart, going out into the life and character.

The first words which Jesus spoke indicated this belief. The poor in spirit already possess the kingdom of heaven. The pure in heart already see God. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He who has the faith which Jesus possessed, has eternal life abiding in him. The water that Jesus gives becomes a spring of water within the soul, "springing up into everlasting life." Do not look for an outward heaven, saying, "Lo! here," or "Lo! there"— "for the kingdom of heaven is within you."

When we come to study the words of Jesus as we now study human theologies, we shall find that he identifies goodness with heaven, and makes Character the essence of Salvation. And when we see that spiritual tastes and habits are not to be acquired in an hour, and perceive that all outward professions, prayers, and sacraments avail nothing unless the heart is pure, a new motive will be added to increase the goodness of the world. Character will then be the fruit of Christian faith to an extent never before realized.

CONTINUAL PROGRESS.

The fifth point of doctrine in the new theology will, as I believe, be the *Continuity of Human Development* in ALL WORLDS, or the *Progress of Mankind* onward and upward FOREVER.

Progress is the outward heaven, corresponding to the inward heaven of character. The hope of progress is one of the chief motives to action. Men are contented, no matter how poor their lot, so long as they can hope for something better. And men are discontented, no matter how fortunate their condition, when they have nothing more to look forward to.

The old theology laid no stress on progress here or progress hereafter. The essential thing was conversion; that moment passed, the object of life was attained. A man converted on his death-bed, after a life of sin, was supposed to be as well prepared for heaven as the man who had led a Christian life during long years. There was no hint given of further progress after heaven should be reached, but eternity was to be passed in perpetual thanksgiving, or in perpetual enjoyment of the joys of paradise.

Such, however, was not the teaching of Jesus. The servant in the parable who earned two pounds was made ruler over two cities; he who earned five pounds had the care of five cities. And this accords with all we see and know; with the long processes of geological development by which the earth became fitted to be the home of man; with the slow ascent of organized beings from humbler to fuller life; with the progress of society from age to age; with the gradual diffusion of knowledge, the advancement of civilization, the growth of free institutions, and the continual attainment of higher conceptions of God.

The one fact which is written on nature and human life is the fact of progress; and this must be accepted as the purpose of the Creator. He who made this world so lovely will make the other world as lovely, and as full of all that can contribute to our education and progress; THERE, as here, what a man soweth he will reap; THERE, as here, will be found an infinite variety of occupation, employment, discipline; enough to know, enough to do, enough to love. God, who has made this earth with such boundless provision for us; who has spread such a majestic and tender beauty over all nature; who has filled sky and sea, air and earth, with such harmonies of form and colour, such melodies of woods and winds and waters;

will open around us THERE a still more sublime scenery, a still more lovely nature, under the same great Providence, the same all blessing Love.

"We ask for peace, O Lord!
Thy children ask thy peace;
Not what the world calls rest,
That toil and care should cease;
That through bright sunny hours
Calm life would fleet away,
And tranquil night should fade
In smiling day—
It is not for such peace that we should pray.

"But give thy peace, O Lord!
To toil while others sleep,
To sow with loving care
What other hands shall reap—
To lean on thee, entranced,
In calm and perfect rest,—
Give us *that* peace, O Lord!
Divine and blest,
Thou keepest for those hearts which love thee best."

Such will be the Theology of the Church of the Future, which will be emancipated from ritualism, dogmatism and sectarianism, and possess continually more and more of the mind and heart of Christ Jesus.

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

SPIRITUAL LIFE.

ALL I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all that I have not seen.—*Emerson.*

THE Sermon on the Mount is the Magna Charta of the kingdom of God.—*Neander.*

NOT a seed on the face of the earth could be made to grow by what is popularly known as force, or power. But by influences so gentle that they are hardly appreciable the acorn swells into the storm-defying oak, and a continent presents its annual burden of golden grain and luscious fruit. Many a flinty rock, on which the chisel could make but little impression, has been disintegrated and decomposed by atmospheric and climatic influences, and now mingles with the dust of the earth. Many a wayward son, whom authority and harshness were hurrying to ruin, has been saved by the gentle tones or the pleading tears of his mother. Many a culprit, unmoved by the severest punishment, and by the agents of muscular morals given over as incorrigible, has been brought to penitence and reformation as a sister of charity or an angel of mercy touched the divine chord in his soul, and recalled the associations of his childhood and the prayers his mother taught him. The Beatitudes of Christ have blessed and saved more storm-tossed and suffering souls than all the anathemas of the world.—*Eli Fay.*

THE history of religion is, in a large degree, the history of the development of humanity. Of God we may say that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. But man is a child of growth, and the history of religion is the record of his growth into the thought of God. The universe is ablaze with revelation, but man can receive only so much light as enters the eye of his soul. Yet the fundamental character of religion is seen in the fact that its germs appear so early in the life of the race. It may be disputed whether religion is coeval with the origin of the intellect, but we believe that the elements which religion involves are just as ineradicable from human nature as intelligence itself. Putting it metaphorically, man is no more man with an empty heart than he is with an empty head.

ROSEMARY STREET MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION.

ON Monday evening, October 1st, the Opening Conversazione of the seventeenth session of this Association took place in the Schoolroom and Lecture Hall connected with Second Rosemary Street Church (Rev. J. C. Street's). Tea was partaken of in the Schoolroom, after which the company proceeded upstairs to the Lecture Hall, where the chair was taken by the President (Rev. Mr. Street). After a pianoforte solo by Mr. A. E. J. M'Creary, six new members were duly proposed, seconded, and admitted as members of the Association. The Chairman then delivered an address, in the course of which he said that it fell to his lot for the seventeenth time to open the proceedings of that Mutual Improvement Association. That implied that they had had sixteen years of a history, for the address at the beginning of the proceedings was delivered at the opening of each year. For sixteen years they had done him the honour of electing him president

of the Association, and to the best of his ability he had discharged the duties assigned him. They had again called him to the honourable position of president. It was in that capacity that it fell to his lot to say a few words at the beginning of their year. He was happy to be able to say that the Society was in a most vigorous and flourishing condition, and that it had with unbroken harmony pursued its work from year to year. They commenced their seventeenth year with considerably over a hundred subscribing members, and not an inconsiderable number of those members were ladies. He was also able to say that their Society was, as it was originally, absolutely unsectarian—that it did not belong to any particular Church or congregation, that it was open to all persons in the community who desired intellectual culture and social enjoyment. Nearly all the Churches in Belfast had members in that Association. They had had during the Society's history Jews and Gentiles, representatives of all Churches and all political bodies, and their membership at the present time was as diversified as any body of men and women in the country. Their proceedings had been of the most pleasant and harmonious character. The diversity of their opinions had never in any case interfered with the pleasure and enjoyment of their intercourse. In Belfast there was great diversity of opinion, and feelings on some subjects ran very high. What they wanted were platforms where they could all meet together, and as citizens cultivate pleasant social relations, and that was one of the objects of the Association. Having referred to the good work which had been done in the past by that Society, Mr Street concluded amid applause. The following selections were subsequently given, and were very highly appreciated by the audience:—President's inaugural address; solo, Mr. A. E. J. M'Creary; violin solo, Mr. J. Millin; song, Mrs Hyndman; piano solo, Miss Lizzie Campbell; reading, Rev. J. C. Street; piano solo, Mr. A. E. J. M'Creary; reading, Mr. J. H. Gilliland; violin solo, Mr. J. Millin; song, Mr. M'Creary. Dancing was afterwards engaged in by a large number of the ladies and gentlemen in attendance.

SALVATION.

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF A DEVOUT VEGETARIAN.

"Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
Still all my cry shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!"

What is Salvation? It is a question of the first importance, like that older one of jesting Pilate, What is truth? It's innermost meaning is perhaps suggested best in its derivation—*Salvus:* whole—THE BEING MADE PERFECTLY WHOLE! It has the wholesome ring of Health; it is musical with the reblended harmonies of Perfection.

But if this definition be accepted; if Salvation be not some far-off, distant reward for a good life in this world; if it be not some strange bestowal of an ungotten gift, but rather the natural outcome of obedience to God's laws—the wholeness which is the fruit of righteousness—what a depth of new meaning is given to the familiar phrase! The whole direction of life's education will be changed; for then the acceptance of definite dogmas, the saying of many prayers, the giving of abundant alms—all count as nothing in the balances, when weighed against simple obedience to God's will.

And yet how hard it is to receive this symplicity of Salvation may be seen in the record of all the Churches. Asceticism, Monasticism, Ritualism, are alike protests against the low, vulgar conception of life's duties; they are reachings after the higher life; they are gropings after the Ideal. But alas, the verdict of experience and common-sense upon them is failure. They have not made men and women more loving, more self-sacrificing, more humble, more Christ-like. Men grope in them for the narrow way that leadeth to Salvation; but they are paths of man's own imagining—paths in which the weary feet can find but little rest.

It were well if the popular idea of Salvation—that distant heaven which must be reached through the gloomy portal of death—could be for ever dissipated, because it acts as a brake upon the wheels of effort, as a sleeping draught upon the energy of enthusiasm. It is essentially unpractical; it appeals to no motive but the

selfish eagerness to escape or acquire. There is no logical sequence in the premises and the conclusion; and so the majority of men give up all thought of religion as a personal responsibility; they surrender their consciences and their so-called spiritual concerns to some special minister or Church; they accept the time-honoured "scheme of salvation," and divide their lives into two portions, one of which is mainly sabbatical, and is occupied with preparing for the eternal Future; the other is mainly week-day, and concerned with the provision for the immediate Present. That such a divorce is at once unnatural and absurd, goes without saying; and yet it is the inevitable consequence of an unpractical and illogical theory of the purpose of Life.

The true Salvation, which means, not only obedience to the Will of God, but the love of God's Law, cannot be relegated to the dim and distant future; it is a part and parcel of the daily life, it is the nerve and fibre of the every day existence. Take the case of the drunkard, who is persuaded to take the pledge. For many a long day he has to learn the difficulty of climbing the steep ascent of Duty. The struggle with unsatisfied cravings must be passed through, the victory over perverted appetites must be won, before the perfect peace which is the essence of being made perfectly whole can be felt and known. As long as there is struggle, there is no Salvation—the terms are contradictory.

Nor is this statement of the case sufficiently strong. The entire moral momentum must be reversed, and the desire must run in the way of God's commandments. It is the diseased desire which is the root of all evil. The whole Man has to be brought into harmony with God's will, so that the *desire* may be converted to that which is right. To repeat our illustration, it is hopeless to appeal to the moral motive of the confirmed inebriate. The whole will is sapped and undermined by the ravages of physical disease. The debilitated stomach, the broken-down brain, are all factors in the question. The physical injury must be met on the physical plane. But when once this has been accomplished, when once the reinvigorated body begins to be in harmony with the renewed will, then the process of Salvation is begun.

And so, in all social relations, the perfect law of the Ideal holds true. When the flesh-eater hates the pseudo-tastiness of his carnivorous feasts, and abhors the false flavours of his culinary condiments; when he has learned to love the delicious variety of fruit, and grain, and nuts—then for him also the process of dietetic Salvation is begun. When he who is impure has learned to loathe the sensual sins which war against the soul, when he has learned to love that heavenly chastity which is the sign and seal of God's abiding presence, then for him also the process of Salvation is begun—for in the body he has begun to know God. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled!"

A. F. Hills.

"The highest revelation," said Emerson, "is that God is in every man." The incarnation is as universal as human life itself.

The best form of responsive service is that which consists in putting a good sermon into good practice.

The original meaning of martyr is a witness. If the opportunity to be a martyr to the truth, in the tragic sense of the word, is less in an age of toleration than in an age of bigotry, the opportunity to be a witness to the truth is as great as ever.

IT MOVES.

Galileo was right, though strenuously disputed at the time. The world moves,—the world of thought as well as the world of matter. There can be no rest for an idea any more than for an atom. If every particle of matter is in motion, every element of spirit is moving, too. The planet on which we live is a speck of dust compared with the universe in which it floats. It is gratifying to know that it is no exception to the law of the universe. Now and then men venture to tell us that the world is anchored. They even undertake to show us the cables which hold it. But the tow is spun out of their own brain.

Our planet bowls through space so silently that we have no sensation of motion. But the seasons come and go, and show us that we have been moving all the time as if we had been shot out of a cannon. So, to see the orbital motion of the world of thought, we must watch the sun in the sky, we must note the change of seasons and wait for the fruit. The world has been moving long enough for us to tell in what direction it is going. We can trace its pathways and its cycles. We can see the unfolding of life, the development of man, the spread of knowledge, the revelation of truth, the diffusion of love, the march of justice. We can discover epochs in the organization of society, in the administration of government, in the advancement of science, and the application of benevolence. In spite of croakers and pessimists, the world not only moves, but there is good evidence that the world of thought and life is moving onward and upward. Man is growing into the possession not only of the planet on which he stands, but of the highest capacities of the nature he possesses. The only redemption humanity needs is to grow unto its full stature. What a heaven it would be if every man were equal to the Best! But the Best is reclaiming the Worst. The kingdom of God is coming. The Power that moves the world is the same Power that can bring it to fulfilment. And we have yet to learn that God ever ruined a world in making it, or that he is incapable of training, educating, and saving any of his offspring.

Yes, the world moves; and there is no better sign of its motion than that this faith in God is growing in man, and man is growing by this faith in God.

THROUGH THE DEPTHS.

The quiet dweller on the prairie, far from the roar of surf and breaker, who has never seen the grandeur of the ocean, can have but a faint conception of the imagery employed by the Psalmist, drawn from the restless, cruel sea. But one who has sailed on it in calm and in storm, who has spent summers and winters on its shores and seen it in its fury lash rock and headland, knows what it means when David cries, "Thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves," "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." He knows, too, what it means when "he maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still."

One of the most forcible metaphors applied to a human life compares it to a bark upon the sea, setting out from calm, sheltered waters, and sailing over unknown seas to a distant haven. It seems tossed about at the will of the mighty waves, blown hither and thither by every breath that blows; but, if it be well equipped with rudder and compass, they guide it on its way.

Once, upon a long voyage, the passengers of the "Sydenham," a sailing ship, were gladdened day after day and week after week by the presence of a companion vessel, which happy accident had brought within their sight. She bore the significant name of the "Floating Light." By day her snowy sails and by night her ruddy lamps were beacons to her sailing mate. When the waves were laid, and the brisk "trades" sent both ships scudding merrily on under full sails, she was ever a little ahead. When storms struck, and through laboring seas under almost bare poles they struggled with the gale, she bore herself with gallant strength. At times it seemed as though the waves would swallow her or crush her decks; but, when all hearts stood still in looking at her peril, she would rise to the crest as though she were a thing of life, sink into the hollow of the next wave, and then rise again with as much grace as the great white albatrosses that followed in her course, resting from contest with the wind upon the surface of the sea. Again the sunshine fell over the southern sea, and again her snowy pinions were shaken out to the gentler breeze, and in swift motion she left albatross and frigate bird behind, they loving to linger where the waves were wildest. Weeks passed, and again storm upon storm struck the companion ships; and in a dark, tempestuous night the parting came. When morning dawned, the larger craft was all alone upon the mighty deep. Had the beautiful "Floating Light" been quenched? Two more months passed, and the "Sydenham" made her distant port. Her captain was ready to announce the loss of his ocean consort, for it seemed impossible that she could have outridden that fearful storm; but before he had the chance the owners boarded his ship, and asked: "Why this delay? The 'Floating Light' reported you a month ago." Guided by a skilled captain, manned by resolute purpose, with true compass and stanch rudder, she had overcome all obstacles, and had come into her desired haven.

So there are souls who astound us by the way they outride the storms of life. It seems as though sorrow and affliction were overwhelming them, griefs that the world may know and bitterness that must be hidden away in the lonely heart. They cry in their distress, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me," as they plunge in the depths; but, lo! while we watch to see them lost before our helpless gaze, they rise gently to the trembling crest, and in

firm accents add, as did the sweet singer of Israel, "Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." And when, after storm upon storm coming in quick succession has tossed them about, there falls at last the stroke that it seems impossible for them to bear, and we think to see them lose heart and courage, even then we hear the still, small voice, the whisper of their faith, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Is it any wonder that we feel such souls should be to us who sail beside them on life's troubled sea "floating lights," beacons to quicken our own hope and trust? As Christ was an example to us of the possibilities of humanity, so are they examples of what we, too, may attain with such patience and faith. Our hearts go out to such souls, not with sympathy and love alone, but with honor and reverence. In bearing their own griefs, they are teaching us how to bear ours. Their cheerful submission, their unquestioning love, show us, as no precepts can do, that even from out the depths one may sing,—

"Blest be the sorrow, kind the storm,
Which drives us nearer home."

Rosemary Street Mutual Improvement Association.

SEVENTEENTH SESSION, 1888-89.

The Committee have the pleasure of announcing the following

PROGRAMME UNTIL CHRISTMAS 1888.

1888.		
Oct. 1	—Opening Conversazione.	
„ 8	—"The Religion of Shakespeare," ..	Rev. Wm Holmshaw.
„ 15	—"Socialism and Land,"	Mr. Thos. Wilson.
„ 22	—"The Sun,"	Mr. James Cowie.
„ 29	—"Have Christian Missions been Successful?"	Discussion.
Nov. 5	—"Is Atheism Logical?"	Mr. J. Murphy.
„ 12	—"Wordsworth,"..	Mr. W. J. Sloane.
„ 19	—"Money," ..	Mr. W. G. Mulligan, B.A., LL.B.
„ 26	—"Thomas Paine,"	Mr. J. M'C. Martin.
Dec. 3	—Lecture, ...	Rev. J. Bruce Wallace, M.A.
„ 10	—Music and Readings, ...	Members and Friends.
„ 17	—Original Short Papers, ...	Members and Friends.

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